

Frozen Turd Soup part one

an e-mail Improv with Lenny Hall & Jeffrey Bernoth

Someone asked me to go see this up and coming punk band called Frozen Turd Soup
As an independent record producer, I'm always looking for new bands. So I get to the club and the band is already playing. The music is so loud and throbbing I thought my head was gonna split open. After hearing two songs the vocalist who was drinking red wine vomits on the edge of the stage. No one seemed to be bothered by this except one guy who went up to the front of the stage and skimmed the puddle with his hand so it splashed all over the band. The band treated it like a standing ovation. After the vocalist fell and started rolling around in it I decided it was time to leave. What's the world coming too? I can only guess, but when I start to guess it gets a little scary.

I stepped outside into the nicotine cloud to get away from the earsplitting chaos. I'd quit smoking decades ago, and I can't believe I used to voluntarily ingest that crap. Enjoying the quiet and kinda rainy night, I thought about whether I should stay for the main act, Fernando Tremendo. Supposedly he was a punk solo act from Lisbon with a few 7" records under his belt, and he was gearing up to record his first LP. Right away some younger guy with an eyebrow ring and a white Frozen Turd Soup t-shirt asked if I had a cigarette. He had red wine vomit on his shoulder.

The young man with the eyebrow ring and Frozen Turd Soup t-shirt was the Bassist in the band. His name was Pick Scales this was just another gig helping his friend Dino Costello, aka Wranks Zuppa who played drums in the band. Both Pick and Dino were really jazz musicians but couldn't get many gigs because Jazz was not in vogue in

Lowell any longer. Fernando Tremendo was in Lowell to record his first LP on Cheapness Records called Punk -Be Bop and was going to be produced by Ron

Lessard at RRRecords. St.Fernando was moving away from Punk to a new unique style

never heard before let alone in Lowell. Dino comes out from the bar, The Club Mondo

and gives Pick a cigarette. They ask me this young woman in her early tweenties who is

hanging outside smoking a joint if we want to go join them and get some breakfast?Its

after midnight. I figure I'm going to be at the recording with Fernando so I'll see him

then.Besides the woman has decided to go too.She the vocalist in a rock band called

Flesh Fix and her name is Weirdola.I heard she use to have a jumpsuit she wore in her

early days that was shaped like a giant vagina. Sometimes the people who seem the

oddest can be the most interesting and are usually harmless. So off we go.This could be

an interesting night. Maybe later there will be a late night jam at the Bohemian Hide A

Way.People say these days there is nothing interesting happening in Lowell. That's not

always true.Sometimes you just have know where to look and how to act.In my case,I

act like I know what's going on, or at least like I've been there before. We walk down the

Club Diner, presumably under the pretense of getting some food, but Pick and Dino

keep chain smoking outside and we wind up hanging out in front of the place until they

turn the sign over to CLOSED. Weirdola keeps staring at her hands, marveling in long

and loquacious sentences about the miracle of their existence, all the stuff they made in

the past, all the things they're gonna do in the future. She's stoned, ask her what Flesh

Fix is like.She said that they used to be three-chord Ramonesy punk, but after hanging

out a little while at RRRecord, she and the gang got hipped to Mr. Lessard's noise

collection have since just regulated themselves to composing music with found objects.

No wonder she picking up weird bits of trash on the walk over. Before

heading to
Bohemian Hide A Way, Weirdola says she has to get a couple of her
"instruments" over
at her practice space on the fourth floor of some buildingin Market St. Me,
Dino & Pick
decide what the hell. Riff Tempo a local guitarist and someone very involved
in a new
genuine music scene happening in Lowell is employed as a dish washer at
the club diner
and is leaving. He's looking for some brain oil. Weirdola has a connection in
Centerville
so we walk over to Eleventh St. Riff is always someone to get a Rant Slam
going starts
one.I stayed out of it.Not my bag but I noted it for my reporter buddy Russell
Sprouts.

Riff

Why isn't there mouse flavored cat food?

Pick

Why is it that the uneducated minds always
criticize the brilliant minds?

Dino

Why don't people on TV ever go to the bathroom?

Weirdola

If a person told you they were a pathological
liar,

should you believe them?

Pick

Doesn't expecting the unexpected make
the unexpected become the expected?

Weirdola

If people from Poland are called Poles,
why aren't people from Holland called Holes?

Dino

If all the world is a stage,where is the audience?

Riff

If a book about failures doesn't sell,is it a success?

Weirdola

If beef comes from a cow and ham from a pig,
why do they put beef in hamburgers?

If corn oil comes from corn...where does baby oil come from?

Dino

Why do we bake cookies and cook bacon?

Pick

Do penguins have knees?

How come wrong numbers are never busy?

If a brown cow eats green grass why is it's milk white?
Riff

If a woman with multiple personalities threatens to kill
herself would it be considered a hostage situation?
Pick

If love is blind is lingerie considered Braille?
If nothing sticks to Teflon how do they stick Teflon to the
pan?

Weirdola

If a turtle does not have a shell on, is he homeless or
naked?

If a vegetarian is someone who eats vegetables,
what does that make a humanitarian?

Pick

If swimming is so good for your figure,
how do you explain whales?

If cops arrest a mime do they tell him he
has the right to remain silent?

Weirdola

If someone were to pay you ten cents for a kind word
you

spoke and collect five cents for every unkind word,
would you be rich or poor?

Dino

If today is the first day of the rest of your life,
what was yesterday?

Riff

If we aren't supposed to eat animals why are they made of
meat?

Dino

If helium existed in solid form, and you ate it
would you get heavier or lighter?

Riff

I never spit in your drink; why do you smoke in my air?
Weirdola

Since light travels faster than sound, isn't that why
some people appear bright until you hear them speak?

Pick

Is it true that cannibals don't eat clowns
because they taste funny?

Riff

Isn't it a bit unnerving that doctors call what they do
"practice"?

Weirdola

If you're in a vehicle going the speed of light,
what happens when you turn on the headlights?

Dino

What do you do when you discover an endangered
animal that eats only endangered plants?

Pick

Where does the white go when the snow melts?

Weirdola

Why are cigarettes sold in gas stations
when smoking is prohibited?

Riff

Why are there interstate highways in Hawaii?

Pick

Why doesn't the fellow who says "I'm no speech maker"
let it go at that instead of giving a demonstration?

Weirdola

What is listed as the hair color on a
drivers license of a bald man?

Pick

Why does the sun on the Raisin Bran
cereal box wear sunglasses?

Dino

Why do men have nipples?

Why do the hours at work drag on endlessly
when the years seem to fly past?

Pick

Why do the sick people have to walk all
the way to the back of the pharmacy
for medicine when cigarettes can
be purchased at the front door?

Riff

Why do they call it 'Chili'if if it's hot?

Why do they call it research when looking for something new?

Weirdola

Why do they sterilise needles for lethal injections?

Dino

Why do we drive on parkways and park on driveways?

Riff

Why do we have so much enthusiasm for criticism
and so much criticism for enthusiasm?

Pick

Why do you need a driver's license to buy liquor
when you can't drink and drive?

Weirdola

Why is it called lipstick if you can still move your lips?

Pick

Why is it new and improved?

If it's new how can it be an improvement
of something and if it's improved how
can it be something new?

Weirdola

Why is it that when one man kills another he is hanged,
but when one man kills millions, he is hailed as a conqueror?

Riff

Why is it that when you're driving and looking for an address,
you turn down the volume on the radio?

Dino

Why is lemonade made with artificial flavoring,
while dishwasher soap is made with real lemons?

Riff

Why is it that you sit in front of your TV
and behind your computer?

Pick

Why is it, whether you sit up or sit down, the result is the same?

Half way up Eleventh St Weirdola calls the connection and they met him outside the building. Everyone calls him Uncle Daddy. He is a weasel but no one else is out this late and we don't plan on hanging out anyways. We get the B O and head back to downtown stopping at Dunkin Donuts before we cross the bridge. Sitting in Dunkins we exchange internet profiles.

We leave Dunkins and walk over to where Weirdola lives and make our way up the many staircases to the fourth floor. Pick and Dino lag behind so Weirdola, Riff and I get up there first. We walk in her studio and I notice what looks like octave bongos made from oatmeal boxes cut at different lengths, pieces of broken glass strung on wire like chimes and a few instruments. She grabs a metal bowl and a metal frying pan lid and says lets go. Pick and Dino are just getting to the fourth when we close the door and say we're heading out.

Its to late now to hit the Bohemian Hide A Way so we all head for home and call it a night.

Frozen Turd Soup part two

an e-mail Improv with Jeffrey Bernoth & Lenny Hall

Going to bed that night, I couldn't believe the shenanigans I had just gotten myself involved in. But hey, that's Lowell sometimes. I wanted to go out to lunch tomorrow with Russell Sprouts so I could get all the notes I took to him.

He usually was around on Sundays, but he always does things his own way. I couldn't stop thinking about something Pick Scales said during the rant slam.

He may have just been talking out of the side of his mouth, but when he asked

about whales, who are allegedly mammals, and who swim all the time, when he asked why they aren't maybe a little slimmer, I started to worry myself. This was great. I'd had insomnia for many years when I stopped smoking, but after a lengthy bout with melatonin I was able to sleep ok. After weaning myself off that things were pretty much back to normal, but this whole whale nonsense was kind of driving me nuts. I'm a little embarrassed about how much I thought about it. Whales should be slim, dammit. They swim all the time

! Imagine being a creature who breathed air, and you're confined to the ocean

all your life. That made me sad too. Don't get me wrong, I love America, for all

its faults, and the sad clowns they have running and ruining everything, it's all

well and good and the same old story, but this whole thing was enough to push

me over the edge. I wonder what insight Russ might have into the matter...

Russell Sprouts lived in a small room in a rooming house for years in Lowell on Appleton St. The bathroom was down the stairs and down the hall so

most of the time if he had to take a squirt he would go out the window on to the flat roof and go in the alley between the buildings. He had a small frig and a

hot plate to cook on. He reads a great deal from bios to higher thought issues, usually non-fiction. He has lots of stories of some of the happenings in the rooming house while he lived there in the 1980's and early 1990's when there was lots of activity on the street and in the building. He has one bad leg and the other leg has a bad foot so he has trouble walking and getting around.

I catch up with him downtown on Middle St where he is checking out a street musician performing named Tony D'Wonderful.

Tony delivers take out at Wing Wangs Chinese Restaurant and sometimes does his act between deliveries. He had dreams of becoming a lounge singer but could never find a band or be with one long enough to do a professional performance. He usually performed on a Korg Keyboard Music Workstation and did vocals on top of it. This day he was just singing because the city of Lowell doesn't allow street musicians to use amps. He was singing songs by Captain Beefheart, The Fugs, a few Frank Zappa tunes and several songs by Doctor Hook that were written by Shel Silverstein. I know this because I hang around and walked around downtown for three hours before Russell showed up. He can't afford a regular walker or one of those fancy motor chair but he

has this portable hospital commode that has wheels that he uses. He likes it better than a walker because when he's tired and stops somewhere he can sit on the pot. I see him with it in Market Basket all the time. Someone said he can walk just fine but he likes to draw attention to himself and goof on people. If that was true we would have to admit he has a lot of balls. But he may just do it to make a bad impression on undesirables. So I find a park bench and I tell him about the rant, show him my notes and tell him of my concerns. He reads the notes and is silent for a few minutes like some zen master and says.

I've been in Lowell all my life and that's many years and I've seen many things.

Many things come and many things go. In the 70's and the 80's it wasn't hip to

be from Lowell so the real hipsters who lived in Lowell, not those imitations, had

their own lingo and attitude they used around people who weren't cool to blow

their mind and keep them at bay. First of all I would consider that maybe whales

eat much more than they lose swimming. That's for you to figure out if its still flopping around in your brain. The people you mention might have been testing

you or seeing if you would hang in there. It sounds like you did. He went on to say.

I've seen Lowell and seen creative people come and go. The Front Page on

Middle St in the early 80's had blues on Friday and Saturday. Jazz on Sunday and open mic on Tuesdays. The Blues bands and jazz bands were usually musicians or bands that were local. The open mic was always locals from Lowell

or around Lowell and the people who went there were usually at least a little hip

and maybe cared a little bit more than you see today. In the late 80's another

blues club on Merrimack St opened called Downtown. The Front page had been

closed now for years, The owner was called Speakeasy Pete and operated a club in Cambridge called the speakeasy that he had closed. He was now in Lowell

and he brought the blues back with a vengeance. The blues was really hip now because of Stevie Ray Vaughn and Blues clubs were doing very well. That club

closed and I haven't seen another decent blues club or blues band since. A club

opened for a while on Middle St around 2001 called Evos but it didn't last

long

but was cool. The last place I thought was kind of cool was a place called the Sugar Shack on University Ave till around 2002 when it closed. It had open mic

and many locals went there to perform and hang out. So I mention Club Mondo

or is it Cafe Mondo? He says some people call it Cafe Mondo because when it first opened it had food and drinks but stopped to keep a low profile. Now some

call it Club Mondo because you bring your own food and drink. He says that there

is a modern type of slam happening there on Presidents Day that I'm involved

with you might want to check out. I asked him about the Bohemian Hide A Way

and he says that it's a low profile operation and just getting started somewhere

on Salem St. I think to myself that I wished we had gotten to go there that last

night I was at The Mondo.

Russell says he has to go pee and then check out this woman who he says

is playing percussion with a metal bowl, a frying pan lid, and what looks like wire

with broken glass on it over on Central St. I decide to go to Espresso Pizza get

a couple of slices and walk around and see what else is going on before the sun goes down in Lowell. As I crossed Central St, headed toward the Dunkin Donuts on the corner, I thought about what Russ said. Was there some subversive coterie of hip Lowellians who had the power to blow a guy's mind?

I had such little left of my own anyway! I could hear D'Wonderful belt out the chorus to "CIA Man," and his voice ricocheted off those tall walls, along those narrow streets where somebody's sister was standing around waiting for something, everybody waiting for everything, my god it was quite the world to

be in after all. I didn't realize I had been standing in the road thinking about whales

and prostitutes until a guy in a white Econoline van honked his horn. "Hey what

the hell's going on, you?" I turned and recognized my old friend Andy Nipples driving the van! I didn't realize he'd been in town! He was in a band called Warm

Nipples out of Long Island, but he mostly just sold records online and would play shows as a solo outfit now.

I motioned for him to meet me at Espresso, and after he parked the van, he and his buddies filed in looking a little road weary. I didn't even realize that they were old buddies of mine, the band Rimplants, featuring Dan, Christopher & Tom. "What the hell's going on here?" I asked. "What brings you guys to Lowell?" "We have a show at the art gallery over on Market, Uncharted, but we hit some heavy traffic and are starving." "You know," I said, "if you wanna get a drink somewhere, we can go to Tremonte's for some pizza and beer." "No, no, this is fine," said Andy Nipples. "We're all, like, not drinking anyway." "What the hell?" "No, no, actually. I haven't really drank since about 2014." We split two and a half pizzas, the five of us caught each other up on what was going on. Rimplants, a 90s era pop punk outfit reminiscent of early Green Day, were on tour promoting their LP *The Whaling Voyage*. Andy Nipples put it out on his own label, Econoline Records. Andy was doing solo Nipples songs and driving the band around, hoping to also sell a bunch of foreign punk 7" out of the back of his van. Nipples was always wheeling and dealing. I'd seen pictures of him holed up in his small apartment

in Long Island, staying up all hours of the night with his cat just packing up records and shipping them all over the world. When an art guy gets into that kind of business, when does he have time to do his art? I always wondered.

Dan Boomer was the singer, guitarist, songwriter of Rimplants and he worked

as an archivist at Queens College. He always told me stories about finding documents on the two most famous alums there, Seinfeld and Paul Simon. He was a quiet, mild-mannered guy, but I had the feeling he had a dark past. I told the guys that maybe I could meet up and see their show at Uncharted later on, but I had to meet up with Russ and find out what the show he was seeing was all about. As I described it, I realized that the woman playing all the found instruments was very likely Weirdola!

Russ is hanging out with Lance Gargoyle, a local composer/musician who performs around Lowell. I've heard about Lance Eggbert Gargoyle so I sit down. He's talking about his start and life in Lowell. He says: I visited Lowell often over the years to buy records at Garnicks and a few book stores at the time but I had never lived here or even on my own before. Social Services got me on Welfare and in a room on Summer St. Most of the people I hung out with were from Solomons when I first moved here to Lowell. After living in several rooming houses and trying to survive on welfare I finally got a job as pot washer at Saint Joseph's Hospital on Salem St. Soon after I got in a decent rooming house that I would live at for years on Appleton St. By that time I had become friends with some interesting people in Lowell. Mike Gendreau, a friend who I had met in the Enchanted Kingdom, let me borrow a guitar he owned that only had four strings soon after I came to Lowell. He had it at a guy named Leo who would have jams at his apartment in Centerville. I was a big reader and Leo turned me on to interesting books that would give

me a good diversion from letting my mind wander. Zen,Buddism,Carlos Casteneda and Guidjeff to name a few.I remember bumping into Leo around Lowell when he was doing his vow of silence.

Once I had steady employment at Saint Joes Hospital I would take books from the library and started taking the train to Boston and Cambridge to go to used book stores and one I think is Five Stars. Harvard Square was my favorite place to go for books and an adventure. Someone stole that four string guitar but I was working now so I started to buy guitars from a used furniture store on Middlesex street.I always had at least one guitar.I was recording myself and playing every day. I jammed with Mike sometimes but I really went to town when I met and started jamming with a guitarist named Danny St Hillare.Danny was the cousin of big Bob who lived in my building and told me about Danny. Danny lived in the projects at that time with his father down the street from St Joes so I would see him regularly. I played distorted guitar mainly just chords and Danny would play mostly lead.We recorded many cassettes and we always had a ball.Danny called us The Distortion Brothers.I could always take something simple and make it interesting and evolve and Danny loved to play his ass off.Danny loved the blues and would play along with blues songs at home.He had been playing since he was young.After a while Danny got married,had two sons and finally got to play in a Blues band regularly.One night he was playing a gig and didn't feel well and went to lay down in the van.When the band went out to find him he had passed away. We jammed once before he died when I had better equipment and playing better but it wasn't the same as those old times more than tweenty years earlier.Another guitar player from Centerville comes to mind that died early Al Moody a friend of Mike Gendreau and Leo.Al Moody had a song called Lowell blues back in the eighties. It was a different vibe back then. Maybe in

some ways some people in Lowell would have liked the same activities that were happening at the time like Harvard Square with street musicians and others out performing in the subways and outdoors. The activities in Harvard Square are long gone now and they ain't coming back in Lowell or anywhere else. Not without a core group of concern locals like the crowd that visit Cafe Mondo. Russel Sprouts says he has to go visit Dave at Garnicks Music about the new lens that Dave has developed that Russell wants to show to Lenny Hall, a local actor and film maker. The lens has the capacity to clearly view the foreground and the background. Usually the background is blurred a bit because an ordinary movie camera can not capture the background clearly, Dave Garnick has developed a lens that can. He wants Lenny and his crew to put it to the test. A talks about plans for Club Mondo's new location.

